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ANNUAL ADDRESS
OF
BENJAMIN PARKE,
R. E. G. C. OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR
IN THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA,

*Delivered to the Grand Commandery at their annual session, held
in the Masonic Temple, Philadelphia, June 23, 1858.*

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE GRAND COMMANDERY.

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ANNUAL MESSAGE.

TEMPLARS OF PENNSYLVANIA : Another year with its silent changes and startling events, its gilded hopes and gloomy fears, its mercies and chastisements, expectations and disappointments, for weal and for woe, has passed away, and we are once more assembled in annual conclave. We have again been permitted to bow around our triangle ; with one accord, in the "Apostles' Creed," to renew the profession of our Christian faith ; and, in the words taught by our Lord himself, to pay our devotions to "Our Father who art in Heaven."

Gratitude for life and health, with their attendant blessings, should pervade our hearts, and prepare us rightly to enjoy and properly to improve our annual meeting here as brethren, having at heart one common object, and engaged in a common cause. Here, retired from and elevated above the bustling activities, the feverish anxieties and corroding cares of every-day life ; in this magnificent temple, dedicated to "Virtue, Science and Universal Benevolence ;" consecrated by the teachings of "Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth," with their kindred virtues ; we ought, by friendly greetings, mutual interchange of fraternal feelings, and above all by a hearty, unselfish and harmonious action upon the subjects brought before us, connected with the welfare and prosperity of our Christian order, make this a union long to be remembered in our Masonic life ; a green and pleasant spot upon the map of our Templar pilgrimage. In no place upon this sin-cursed earth, save within those Heaven-constructed sanctuaries—the family and the church, where all are influenced and moved by Heaven's law of love—can the pleasantness and beauty of unity, harmony and friendship be so clearly developed and so deeply felt and appreciated, as within the sanctuary of an Asylum of Masonic Knights Templar—the triangle—surrounded by brothers true and approved, whose hearts have been permeated and moulded by the mild teachings and august mysteries of our order. Who among us, in view of such an assembly, will not, with the holy Psalmist, exclaim : "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity !"

Taking man as he is, with social affections and fraternal longings to be indulged, selfish propensities and turbulent passions to be curbed and restrained, and duties to his fellow man to be performed, our order (in which I *here* include Masonry, with which Christian Masonic knight-hood is in close alliance) is as much a *want*, yea a NEED, of man's nature as are the institutions of civil government ; which, unlike ours, have been so frequently remodeled, upturned and changed in form, as almost entirely to lose the lineaments of their antiquity. There is

much truth, as well as beauty, in the saying: "Ever since symmetry began or harmony displayed her charms, our order has had a being." No man can show when it was not known, or point us to the time when it began to exist. Its birth was, therefore, anterior to either authentic history or tradition. Our ancient Grand Master, King Solomon, in the erection of the Temple, did, with operative Masonry as an *art*, what he undoubtedly did for our order as a *science*—prepared, arranged and brought into form and symmetry, materials already created; many of which *ages* had gathered to his hand. In the one case, he erected a Temple to the honor of God, the uses of his religion, the glory of his nation, and the wonder of the world. In the other case, he organized an institution more enduring than the Jewish Temple, system, or religion; an institution which should faithfully transmit, from generation to generation, to all future time, the moralities and mysteries symbolized in the inventions of Tubal-Cain; their use in the construction of the ark to save the church, or in rearing the Heaven-defying walls of Babel; and from thence transmitting the universal language of symbolism, as well as the august mysteries and solemn ceremonies by which this science was to be *indelibly engraven* upon the mind and memory of the humble and submissive Neophyte, and *as securely hidden* from all the world beside. That institution, whose teaching has been beautifully and truly described as "a system of pure morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols," after a hundred generations have passed away, still stands in the social world like a colossal column or magnificent structure; the crumbled ruins of nations and empires, and the decayed fragments of civil and religious institutions lying around its base and hiding its foundations; but ITSELF, towering towards Heaven, bears almost as many marks of primitive origin and antiquity, as the ledges of rocks or chains of mountains which stand upon the surface of our globe. *In itself*, the most perfect symbol in existence of the GREAT BROTHERHOOD OF HUMANITY, it needs no other justification of its *right* to exist, than the *fact* of its existence; for while man shall continue to be a social being, with a yearning for intimate communion with his fellow man; while man shall have wants to be supplied, and the innocent and helpless of the other sex shall need and claim his protection or support, our order will be a *necessity*. Nor until SIN shall be destroyed, and the apocalyptic angel shall descend from Heaven and declare that time shall be no longer, will the mission of either Masonry or Knighthood be fully accomplished, or their work of benevolence be finished. Their requiem shall be mingled with the millennial chant, and their epitaph, traced in the ashes of a burning world, shall be read before an assembled universe: "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was sick and ye visited me, in prison and ye came unto me."

The truth of this was never more patent and clear than at this time, when all enlightened observation proves a *great want of moral force and action* in the movements of the social world. In point of physical activity, energy and power, the present age is far in advance of any other in the world's history. *Mind* has also been educated and its energies developed, until its powers and achievements are almost superhuman. The one seems to walk the earth with the tread of a giant,

and the other to soar in the heavens with the wings of an angel! The very elements are made to labor at the bidding of man. The lightning is taught to whisper his winged thoughts from State to State, and kingdom to kingdom, as with the telescope he scales the stars and traverses the fields of immensity. But all these mighty developments and wondrous achievements of *physical* and *mental* power, do not educate the *soul* or purify the *heart*. They do not teach man to govern his spirit, subdue his passions, and spread righteousness and peace over the world, which, in obedience to Divine command, he has subdued. They neither teach nor enforce that central truth of morality—a compendium of the law and the prophets, “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;” and consequently fail in rendering either individuals or society good or happy. To do either, as regards even the *present* life, requires not only physical and mental, but *moral* influence, education and power. Now, we believe that, next to that divinely constructed ark for the world’s safety and salvation—the CHURCH—“the pillar and ground of the truth,” our order is the most efficient moral agency operating upon man from without, that the world has ever seen; furnishing an exhibition of *unity* of purpose and *harmony* of action, in a common object and cause, which it might be well for that *higher* agency to emulate as a divinely instituted proof of her mission. “*That they all may be ONE; that the world may know that THOU hast sent ME*”

It is not, therefore, marvellous that, at this day, our order should stand high in the estimation of the wise and the good, wherever civilization and Christianity have shed their light; and that its portals should be thronged with applicants for admission. Nor is it wonderful that among those who seek and obtain entrance within our enclosure, impelled by a heart-yearning for fraternal faith, confidence and communion, like that of David and Jonathan, that there should be many incapable of appreciating our privileges; and *some*, actuated by unworthy motives, like the sorcerer of Samaria, who, professing his faith, was received into the Church, and yet was found to have neither part or lot in the matter. Tares among the wheat; *among* us, but *not of* us.

As Templars, it is with great pleasure that I can say to you that, so far as I am informed, in every part of our wide extended country, our order is prosperous, yearly increasing in numbers and influence; that our banner, emblazoned with our Templar emblem—THE CROSS—an ensign before which superstition must cower and infidelity bow down, is now unfurled from Maine to California, and the Warder’s trumpet sounds from Hudson’s Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. In this, having the highest moral welfare of our own country and the good of our race at heart, we *greatly* rejoice; for, although we may not be called upon, like the Templars of old, to wield our swords in mortal combat with the hosts of infidelity or superstition, we are, if true to our professions and vows, engaged in a moral and spiritual warfare against the hosts of the arch-enemy of man, the lying vanities of the world, “temptation without and corruptions within,” involving consequences to each of us, of most tremendous importance.

It has been said that “the age of chivalry is gone.” We trust this

is true, so far as its spirit was publicly exhibited in the fanaticism of the Crusades; even though the object were to rescue the sepulchre of the Saviour from the possession of the Infidels, that Christian pilgrims might pay their devotions at the holy shrine; might meditate beneath the olive trees of Gethsemane; follow the Saviour in his last walk through the Holy City, even to the hill of Calvary; shed tears with the holy woman in the garden of Joseph; tread the streets and recall the hallowed memories of Bethany; or walk the heights of Olivet, and view the sacred scenes upon which Emmanuel had gazed! We trust it is also true so far as its spirit was exhibited in some of the features and customs of the feudal system; its pride of birth and martial aristocracy; its pomp of helmets, spears and blazonry; its tournament and combat, when surrounded by Bishops, and Barons, and ladies of rank and fashion and beauty, the Sir Knights, attended by their Esquires, so covered with shining armor as only to be recognized by device or emblazoned shield, contended for the prize of valor; the victor receiving it from the Queen of Beauty, amid the music of minstrels and the huzzas and shouts of an assembled multitude! We are more than willing that all these things should have been laid aside, or exchanged for more enlightened though more effeminate customs.

But we are *not* willing that the noble traits of character—the virtues which chivalry, even in its ruder forms, developed, fostered and handed down—should be either lost or forgotten. Its love of valor and readiness to take up arms in defence of home, of country, or of right; its gallantry in redressing wrong, *especially* when woman was the party wronged or oppressed; its lofty spirit of patriotic enterprise, and passion for daring adventure; its whole character, exhibiting the highest appreciation and sense of honor; all deeply tinged, and in many cases thoroughly imbued, with reverence for God and the Christian religion, a love for the Church and its ordinances; all these we delight to cherish.

Many of these characteristics of the age of chivalry, and especially of Christian chivalric knighthood, are worthy of being emulated and practiced at *this* day; when self, and the vices connected with selfishness—whose name is legion—have grown rampant, and eaten deeply into the vitals of society, if not of the State, as a body politic. *True* chivalry was, and ever will be, magnanimity, hospitality, honor, courage, appreciation of woman's worth, patriotism, rigid regard for truth, *faith in God*, unswerving adherence to friends and brethren—in whose behalf money was freely expended, hardships endured, and even life itself risked.

Right glad are we that the Knightly orders, and the teachings which developed, fostered and mellowed these noble characteristics, after a baptism of blood and training in the school of affliction, have been transplanted to this our free land, and here have found a congenial home; and that, under the influence of our free institutions and pure Christianity, they have become AMERICANIZED. That Christian Masonic Knighthood in America is destined to occupy a lofty position, and a *true Christian Sir Knight to stand in the HIGHEST RANK OF MANHOOD*. Let us, therefore, in view of this our *true* position, take

heed that our life and walk, our whole conduct, correspond with the sublime tenets and teachings of our order.

In this connection I beg leave to make a suggestion in regard to the history of Knighthood in the United States; expressing the confident belief that when that history shall be written, Pennsylvania Knighthood, like Pennsylvania Masonry, will stand the *grandest* and the *firmest*, if not the loftiest column in the Union. In a brief notice of "Encampments of Knights in America," published in 1816 by Thomas S. Webb, he places the "Grand Encampment of Pennsylvania" as the oldest in the Union, having been organized on the 17th of May, 1797; at which time it seems there were five Encampments in the State, three of which were in Philadelphia. As Templar Knighthood has at all times in this country been in *alliance* with Masonry, and for a while in *this State* was considered to be under its protection and care, it is most likely that its early history in this State may be clearly traced in the well and carefully kept records of our Grand Lodge. I suggest, therefore, that proper resolutions be here passed, respectfully asking the Right Worshipful the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, permission to examine her records for that purpose, and to copy therefrom any items of Templar history which may be found therein.

Since our last Annual Conelave, I have issued two dispensations, to form and open new Commanderies: both in the North Eastern Section of our state. Both of these have been opened and organized under favorable auspices, and with promises of success.

On the third of October last I issued a dispensation to Sir Sidney Hayden, Sir George H. Bull, Sir Gordon F. Mason, and their legal associates, authorizing the opening and holding a Commandery of Knights Templar and the appendant orders at TOWANDA, in Bradford county; by the name of NORTHERN COMMANDERY. Under this dispensation the Commandery was duly opened and organized on the 4th of December last, by Sir J. L. Gore, E. G. Generalissimo, acting as my proxy for that purpose.

On the 24th day of April last, I issued a dispensation to Sir Robert Simpson, Sir William H. Perkins and others, authorizing the opening and holding a Commandery as aforesaid at SCRANTON, in Luzerne county, by the name of COEUR DE LION COMMANDERY. And on the 28th of the same month with the aid of our V. E. D. G. Commander, Sir A. J. Swartz; E. G. Generalissimo Sir J. L. Gore; E. G. Capt. Gen. Sir C. F. Knapp; with other Sir Knights, I opened and organized the said Commandery in due form. After which the orders of Knighthood were conferred upon 4 applicants; Sir Knight Gore acting as E. Commander, and Sir Knight Knapp as Prelate.

Both of these dispensations are returnable at this time for the action of the Grand Commandery, upon their application for Charters: They are located at eligible points, surrounded by an intelligent community, and manned by highly competent and intelligent officers. I cannot doubt their future success.

The dispensation to open Northern Commandery was issued without the payment of any fees therefor: that question being reserved for the consideration of this Grand Commandery. On page 29 of the pro-

ceedings of our last Grand Conclave will be found the following in relation thereto.

"Application having been made to this Grand Commandery by George Bull, for the endorsement or revival of a Charter herewith presented, of an Encampment which was formerly held in Towanda, Pa., which he asks to be granted without payment, except fee to the Recorder.

"On motion of Sir F. Blackburne,

"*Resolved*, That the matter in relation to the Towanda Encampment be referred to the first four Grand Officers, with full power to take such action in relation thereto as they may deem advisable."

Upon the presentation of a petition in due form, I submitted the question of fee to the Grand Officers named, who with me agreed to remit \$50, of the \$90, due for dispensation. This proposition not being satisfactory to the petitioners, who pressed the request made to the G. Commandery by Sir Knight Bull, to have the \$90 remitted: at the urgent solicitation of several Knights, the Grand Officers agreed that the dispensation might be issued; referring the question of the fee to be paid therefor to the decision of this Grand Commandery. The correspondence in regard to this matter on both sides, is contained in my letter books, and will be submitted either to a Committee or to the G. Commandery, when required.

The last Grand Commandery having by a unanimous vote elected "an experienced and well instructed Sir Knight as GRAND INSTRUCTOR," and made it his "DUTY to visit at least once annually each subordinate Commandery and instruct their officers and members in the work," I felt myself in a great measure relieved from the *obligation* of visiting the several Commanderies for that "supervision, instruction and direction," which the office and the constitution both *imply*, although they may not in terms *require* of the Grand Commander. If it is not intended that the G. Instructor should relieve your chief officer from the duties of visitation, I think the opinion should be so expressed. I *have* however visited Columbia Commandery in Lancaster twice, De Molay, Commandery Reading once, and Parke Commandery Harrisburg several times; at each place, besides giving instructions in the work, installed their officers for the present year. During the year I have several times been called upon for my opinion upon certain questions of Templar Law and Usage—which I have promptly given. These *decisions* I will lay before this Grand Commandery for revision, approval, or rejection; as you may deem proper. This is necessary, as the decisions of the R. E. G. Commander are the law for this jurisdiction, until corrected or set aside by the G. Commandery.

At our last G. Conclave the Committee on the doings of the Grand Officers, presented several important subjects for future consideration, which were referred to special committees to be reported upon at this meeting. Most of these committees it is presumed will present reports for our consideration.

The committee to report upon a uniform dress and regalia, have prepared an able and elaborate report, which I beg leave to recommend to your patient and careful consideration. It will be well to have the

question: What is the proper costume of a Knight Templar? settled, so far at least as it can be settled by a State Grand Commandery. I think it is evident from all history that the original dress of a Knight Templar, was a white mantle or sur-coat to represent a "pure life," with a red cross as a "symbol of martyrdom."—The present dress, (Black) was most likely adopted partly from the Knights of Malta, with whom the Templars in some countries united, after the martyrdom of their Grand Master; and partly as an emblem of mourning for his death, and a memento of his virtues. The apron, as now worn, I think might be entirely laid aside. As Templars "we have no more occasion for level or plumb-line, for trowel or gavel, for compass or square." Our masonic work is completed. We have taken up the sword, and are expected manfully to use it. Our's is a military order, and the costume should be appropriate to military exercise, either on foot or on horseback. In naturalizing christian knighthood in this our land, its trappings of helmet, mail and blazonry, with its vows to Mary, St. Peter and the Pope, and many other things of like character, appertaining to the age and time of the crusades, have very properly been laid aside. Other effete appendages may yet be lopped off.

The unselfish virtues of chivalry, with the solemn and impressive ceremonies which imbedded them in that *great deep* of feeling that lies far below the surface of the world-hardened heart; mellowed, chastened and purified in the light kindled by the Reformation; and arrayed in a costume simple, expressive, yet sufficiently imposing, is and should be, as I conceive, American Knighthood.

The committee "to report a proper method of paying representatives to the Grand Commandery, will also, it is presumed, report. This is a subject of considerable importance. The present regulation of "paying the actual expenses of *three* representatives from each Commandery," it is evident cannot be continued, unless the fees and dues of the subordinate Commanderies shall be increased, or there shall be a large addition to our membership; and yet we should be sorry to see any change, which, by reducing the number of Sir Knights attending our annual Grand Conclave, would render them less interesting and profitable, not only to those who attend, but to the order represented.

Of the committee "to report a code of statutes and regulations," I was appointed the chairman. The matters referred to this committee might easily have been construed to include almost all the matters of Templar legislation, and opened a field for an extended report. Holding, *for myself*, opinions adverse to much legislation; believing it to be the evil of our American Masonic bodies; that our present constitution, with a very few amendments in regard to matters purely local, with the common law and obligations of our order, all well known and understood, were all that was needed at this time in the way of *general* statutes; yet, desirous of learning the opinions of others, I issued a circular to the leading members of our Commanderies, asking their views or suggestions in relation to our duties. Not receiving, in reply to this circular, any definite suggestions, I very naturally concluded that no alterations or additions were required.

I *did* desire the opinions and *aid* of our brethren, especially of the clergy, in preparing an appropriate form of service for the *burial* of

the dead, which for several years past I had thought necessary. Templar Knighthood is emphatically a Christian Order, acknowledging as its compendium of faith the "Apostles' creed." In its government and ritual, therefore, it must be entirely separate from, and independent of, Ancient Craft Masonry. Although every Knight must have passed through the degrees of symbolic Masonry, including the holy Royal Arch—the best moral training school ever instituted by man—he is not required by the rules of Knighthood to continue his membership in either Lodge or Chapter; yet without such membership he is not entitled to Masonic burial. Nor can Knights Templar, *as such*, clad in their proper regalia, and bearing the symbols of their order, join in a Masonic funeral procession if the regulations of our Grand Lodge are enforced.

Knowing that several Sir Knights had expressed a desire to be buried with the honors of Christian Chivalry, I thought it highly proper that we should have a burial service—chaste and imposing, though brief and *eminently Christian*. After issuing my circular, I learned that a committee of the Sir Knights of New York had prepared a burial service, a copy of which I have since received, as adopted by the Grand Commandery of that State. It is a work of great merit, yet I think capable of being considerably shortened and otherwise improved.

When we separated one year ago, our whole country seemed to be in the height of prosperity and progress. Suddenly the ear of business, in its rapid motion, was brought to a dead-look! The concussion shook the commercial world, and scattered ruin, bankruptcy and blight throughout the land. The consequent pecuniary embarrassment has undoubtedly, to some extent, retarded the increase and diminished the funds of our Commanderies; yet we trust the lessons taught have largely added to their moral strength and purity—much more to be desired than numbers.

Such events prove the truth and show the value of the teachings of our order, which it would be well for us often to review. Commencing with that dread and well remembered hour, when with trembling steps we first entered upon the tessellated ground-floor of Masonry, symbolizing the vicissitudes and changes in human affairs; our path of life checkered with good and evil, yet bordered with blessings and comforts strewn around us by Him in whom we then solemnly avouched our trust. Thence upward through the grander courts and sublimer scenes of our Mystic Temple, to the lofty position of a pilgrim warrior in the army of Emmanuel; pledged, as a champion of Truth and "Fellow Soldier of the Cross," to assist and befriend the weary and way-worn in the broken and thorny paths of life, and to use our mystic swords, combining the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, with Justice, Fortitude and Mercy, to succor, defend and protect, as well our brethren bending under the cross of adversity, sickness and want, or assailed by the shafts of calumny and detraction, as the innocent maiden, the destitute widow, the helpless orphan; and, having professed the faith of Christ crucified, manfully to fight under his banner until our life's end. There can be no teachings better adapted to impress our hearts and lives for good, and to move us effectually in the right direction, than the truths brought before us in the prescribed lessons of our ritual.

In *Masonry*—the history of God's chosen people from the dawn of creation; the promises sweetly whispered by angels at Bethel, and the threatenings thundered from Sinai's burning mount; the noiseless rearing of the Temple in the peaceful reign of Solomon, with its rebuilding in troublous times by Zerubbabel. In *Templar Knighthood*—the history of the thrilling events which cluster around the Cross. The agony, betrayal and trial; the death, burial, resurrection and ascension; the voice of eternal love wafted on the midnight breeze from the bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane; the dying wail which rent the air and darkened the noonday sun as it rolled from the hill of Calvary; and the angelic shout which pealed down the sky, and the heavenly radiance which burst forth, as the everlasting doors were opened to receive the King of Glory in his ascension from Olivet. Well has it been said that he who can pass through *all this* and not become a good man, has *in himself* indisputable proof that *his heart* is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

And now, fellow Templars, having enlisted in this warfare, having laid aside the staff and taken up the sword, we are expected *manfully* to fight our way and valiently to run our course. The outside world look for us to be better than others, better than themselves; else why are we so carefully watched, and any deviations from the right path so invariably noted and proclaimed, while a similar error in one of themselves excites no surprise? The uninitiated believe that our privileges are great, that we enjoy a rich treasure; and, on the gospel rule that "where much is given much is also required," they expect us to walk uprightly as children of light, and steadily to tread in the footsteps of our magnanimous and chivalric forefathers; those valient Sir Knights—"Poor fellow soldiers of Jesus Christ"—whose well earned fame has spread both far and wide for acts of charity and pure beneficence; for noble deeds of exalted usefulness.

In view, then, of our position and privileges, let it be our grand ambition to become, in the loftiest sense, PILGRIM WARRIORS! With the cross our emblem, "*In hoc signo vinces*" our motto, and a heavenly crown our aim, let us pitch our tents day by day nearer the Christian pilgrim's home, imbibing each day more of the pilgrim's character, and longing more and more for the pilgrim's rest and the pilgrim's reward.

Seated in this our quiet and beautiful sanctuary, the emblems of our order appropriately displayed around us, none teach a more impressive or instructive lesson than the naked skull and crossed bones, in close contiguity with the Holy Bible—Mortality and Divinity! It is appointed unto all men once to die! In the midst of life we are in death! And yet no truth is less heeded until the grim messenger makes his alarm at our door, and waiting not for the warder's announcement, enters our Asylum in search of his victim. Then, indeed, he is the King of Terrors, and we instinctively pray that, if it be possible, the eup may pass from *us*.

The framers of our ritual were therefore wise in bringing our mortality prominently before us, in intimate connection with the word and way of life; so that the lamp of our faith might be ever kept burning; increasing its light even as we approach the dark portico of the sepul-

ehre. That so, from its darkness and gloom, in the storm-night of the soul, which is to close the drama of life with us, we may hear above the roar of Jordan, our Master's voice in its soothing power, saying, "It is I! Be not afraid; only believe!" And then listen to an Apostle: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Cheerful assurance! If we rightly improve the days of our pilgrimage, though our weak and frail bodies *must* ere long lie down in the tomb—their resting place—our disembodied spirits shall soar aloft like an eagle unfettered, to the cloudless regions of life and light eternal.

I am not aware that, during the past year, Death has called away any member of our Grand Commandery; yet as his sweeping scythe cuts down manhood in its ripeness, youth in its prime, childhood in its innocence, and infancy in its tender bud, we must presume that some intimately connected with us have helped to swell his swath. As Masons, we have lately been called to mourn the departure of our Grand Master—Dr. J. K. Mitchell. Called by a summons which none can evade, his wearied soul left its weakened body; his chair was made vacant, and his gavel laid at rest. We can pronounce no higher eulogy upon him than to say—*He was a good man and our brother!* That he was prepared for his master's call, who can doubt after reading the following from his last poem:

"'Tis a blessing to live, but a greater to die,
And the best of the world is its path to the sky.
Be it gloomy or bright, for the life that he gave
Let us thank him—but blessed be God *for the grave!*
'Tis the end of our toil, 'tis the crown of our bliss,
'Tis the portal of Happiness—aye, but for this
How hopeless were sorrow, how narrow were love,
If they looked not from earth to the rapture above."

To encourage us who are yet in the flesh to be more faithful, as well as to comfort those who mourn, we have a message *direct* from the courts of Heaven: "I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, write: Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

And now, Sir Knights, thanking you for the unanimous vote by which, one year ago, I was elected R. E. Grand Commander, and for the uniform kindness and respect manifested to me during my term of office; knowing that there are among you many others equally zealous and competent, and having more leisure to devote to the duties of the office than myself, I request you to select some other Sir Knight as my successor. After nearly twenty years of *official* service in Masonry and Knighthood, I think I have a right to ask that others may take the van, and allow me a quiet position in the ranks.

BENJAMIN PARKE.